DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 186 883 CS 005 474

AUTHOR Allington, Richard L.
TITLE Poor Readers Don't Get to Read Much. Occasional Paper No. 31.
INSTITUTION Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Inst. for Research on Teaching.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Jan 80
CONTRACT 400-76-0073
NOTE 12p.
AVAILABLE FROM Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University, 252 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824 ($1.75)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Observation Techniques; *High Achievement; Independent Reading; *Low Achievement; *Oral Reading; Primary Education; Reading Assignments; Reading Instruction; *Reading Research; *Silent Reading; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

A review of the literature indicates that instructional differences exist between the instruction given to good and poor readers. A study was conducted to examine the amount of actual reading of connected text, orally or silently, assigned during classroom reading instruction. Twenty-four first and second grade teachers from four school districts were observed as they worked with classroom reading groups. The numbers of words read by children in good and poor reader groups were compared to identify whether the amount of actual reading varies even when the allocated reading instructional time remains relatively similar between groups. Results indicated that the good readers read, on the average, more than twice as many words per session as poor readers. Other results showed that poor readers were seldom asked to read silently and their errors were often treated out of context, with the teacher emphasizing visual or phonic characteristics of the target word. In contrast, the good readers' errors were more often analyzed in the context in which they occurred, with the teachers commenting on the syntactic or semantic appropriateness of the wrong response. Implications of the study are that in order for poor readers to read larger quantities of material the amount of silent reading instruction and independent reading assignments should be increased. (MKM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED186883

Occasional Paper No. 31

POOR READERS DON'T GET TO READ MUCH

Richard L. Allington

Published By

The Institute for Research on Teaching
252 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

January 1980

Publication of this work is sponsored by the Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University. The Institute for Research on Teaching is funded primarily by the Program for Teaching and Instruction of the National Institute of Education, United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of the National Institute of Education. (Contract No. 400-76-0073)

CS005474

JUN 2 0 1980

Institute for Research on Teaching

Teachers' thoughts and decisions are the focus of studies currently under way at Michigan State University's Institute for Research on Teaching (IRT). The IRT was founded in April 1976 with a $3.6 million grant from the National Institute of Education. That grant has since been renewed, extending IRT's work through September 1981. Funding is also received from other agencies and foundations. The Institute has major projects investigating teacher decision-making, including studies of reading diagnosis and remediation, classroom management strategies, instruction in the areas of language arts, reading, and mathematics, teacher education, teacher planning, effects of external pressures on teachers' decisions, socio-cultural factors, and teachers' perceptions of student affect. Researchers from many different disciplines cooperate in IRT research. In addition, public school teachers work at IRT as half-time collaborators in research, helping to design and plan studies, collect data, and analyze results. The Institute publishes research reports, conference proceedings, occasional papers, and a free quarterly newsletter for practitioners. For more information or to be placed on the IRT mailing list please write to : The IRT Editor, 252 Erickson, MSU, East Lansing, Michigan 48824.

Director: Judith E. Lanier

Associate Directors: Lawrence W. Lezotte and Andrew C. Porter

Editorial Staff:

Lawrence W. Lezotte, coordinator of Communications/Dissemination
Linda Shalaway, IRT editor
Janet Flegg, assistant editor

(Lee S. Shulman, co-director with Judith E. Lanier from 1976-1978, and director in 1979, is on a one-year leave at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, California.)

Poor Readers Don't Get to Read Much

Richard L. Allington[1]

The question, "How best do we teach poor readers?" has long been a major issue of contention in the professional literature. Unfortunately, educators are perhaps no closer to resolution today than they were a half-century ago. Until recently, the debate centered almost exclusively around which strategies, materials, and techniques were most appropriately used with under-achieving readers. In the last decade, there have been four dimensions added: an interest in amount of time allocated to instruction (Alpert, 1975), in teacher-learner verbal interactions (Gumperz & Hernandez-Chavez, 1972; McDermott, 1977), in instructions given to students by teachers (Allington, in press; Weinstein, 1976), and in how time in spent in compensatory instruction (Howlett & Weintraub, 1979; Quirk, Trismen, Nalin & Weinberg, 1975). In general, these studies show that the reading instruction given to poor readers is different from that given to good readers.

Rist (1970), for instance, found evidence of preferential treatment of high-ability students in one kindergarten classroom and concluded that the students perceived as having low ability would probably perform to these expectations since they were allocated the least amount of instructional time. Brophy and Good (1970) found that high-ability students received preferential treatment and were granted more autonomy than low-ability students. McDermott (1977), in another study of a single classroom,

---

[1]Richard L. Allington is an associate professor at the State University of New York at Albany and a former research collaborator with IRT's Conceptions of Reading Project.

found poor readers spent less time reading than good readers and that there were differential interaction patterns between the teachers and the different groups -- differences that seemed to favor the good readers. Good and Brophy (1972) suggest that low-achievement students typically receive less opportunities to respond than high-achievement students. Archer (1977) argues that poor readers are less likely to be praised and less likely to be dealt with sympathetically than good readers. (Gumperz & Hernandez-Chavez (1972) noted that good readers were corrected less for their errors than poor readers were, and the poor readers' errors were dealt with more immediately. Duffy (Note 1) presents evidence that the content of instruction differs between good and poor readers in some classrooms.

Weinstein (1976) found a few interactional differences between the teacher and students from different ability groups during whole class instruction, but noted that the teachers acted and reacted differently towards these same students when dealing with them in their reading groups. However, she reports that in reading groups, the good readers typically received fewer evaluative comments and were criticized more, while the poor readers were more likely to be praised after correct responses and after oral reading performance. Allington (in press), on the other hand, reports poor readers were more likely to be interrupted following an error and more often had their attention directed to graphic and phonic characteristics of the misread word. Good readers were interrupted far less often and when the teacher interrupted, the reader was directed to attend to syntactic or semantic information.

Much of what seems to be basic disagreements in the data presented above can be accounted for by noting that the various investigators looked at, and for, different kinds of behaviors in different types of settings with different instruments. Whether differences exist in the instruction

provided good and poor readers depends, then, on which aspects of the instructional environment are studied and whether one wishes to study a single reading lesson, compare two or more instructional groups, or observe reading instruction in general in a large sample of classrooms.

Several other researchers (Allington, 1977; Quirk et al., 1975) did not directly compare instruction given to good and poor readers, but presented data on current practices in compensatory reading programs which strongly suggested that instructional differences do exist. In these studies, poor readers are portrayed as receiving little silent reading instruction or practice (Quirk et al, 1975) and as doing little actual reading relative to the good readers, either orally or silently (Allington, 1977).

Amount of time allocated for reading instruction is undoubtedly a critical variable in ultimate achievement, but at the same time it can be argued that the amount of actual reading accomplished is also crucial. That is, doing contextual reading, as opposed to doing other reading instructional activities, seems to be the only way the learner can integrate the component processes and create self-monitored reading behaviors.

The purpose of the study reported here was to examine the amount of actual reading of connected text, orally or silently, assigned during classroom reading instruction. The numbers of words read by children in good and poor reader groups were compared to identify whether the amount of actual reading varies even when the allocated reading instructional time remains relatively similar between groups.

The Study

Twenty-four first- and second-grade teachers from four school districts volunteered to serve as subjects for this study. The teachers had no direct knowledge of the experimental questions but had been told that the author was interested in observing classroom reading groups.

The author or research assistants visited each classroom to see how much reading instruction the students in the good and poor reader groups received. All teacher participants were asked to simply teach reading as they normally would. Observers either noted the pages read (orally or silently) or audiotape recorded the entire reading instructional session. The number of words read by students during the reading group sessions was computed.

An analysis of variance was computed on the mean number of words read by the students in the two reading groups. Statistically, significant differences ($p < .01$) were evident; good readers read, on the average, more than twice as many words per session as poor readers. These differences are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Differences in Number of Words Read in Connected Text as a Function of Reading Group Placement

	Words Read		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Good reader groups	539	309	141-1206
Poor reader groups	237	136	48-686

Other results were noted that showed poor readers were receiving different instruction from the good readers. First, poor readers were seldom asked to read silently, either individually or as a group. Second, as also noted by Gumperz and Hernandez-Chavez (1972), the poor

readers' errors were often treated out of context, with the teacher emphasizing visual or phonic characteristics of the target word. In contrast, the good readers' errors were more often analyzed in the context in which they occurred, with the teachers commenting on the syntactic or semantic appropriateness of the errant response.

Conclusions

It seems obvious that poor readers do not read as much as good readers in school, and they have few opportunities to practice silent reading. Since students must read to improve their reading abilities, this deficit may, in fact, be a contributing factor to the underachievement of poor readers. While no data were collected on outside-of-reading group reading behaviors, it seems unlikely that the poor readers made up the differences through additional independent reading.

Poor readers seem to be allocated approximately the same amount of time for reading instruction as good readers (Alpert, 1975; Brophy & Good, 1970; Brophy & Evertson, 1976), though some contrary evidence does exist (McDermott, 1977; Rist, 1970). However, less reading is actually accomplished by poor readers than good ones. Several factors noted above seem to be related to the inequity in amount of reading completed.

In addition, the pervasive use of oral reading with poor readers undoubtedly contributes to the lesser number of words read. Oral reading is generally slower than silent reading, even in the primary grades. Also, when a student is reading orally, the teacher, and often the other children, interrupt him/her when errors occur. These interruptions seem to take anywhere from a second to several seconds but, perhaps more importantly, the interruptions seem to disrupt the continuity of the oral performance. Niles, Graham, and Winstead (1977) and Pehrsson (1974) have noted that when

readers are interrupted they tend to read fewer words and make a greater quantity of errors, errors qualitatively worse than when not interrupted. Brophy and Everetson (1976) have noted that successful teachers tend to keep interruptions to a minimum and attempt to move the reader quickly through the difficulty encountered.

Poor readers will need to read larger quantities of material if they are ever to become better readers. Continuing to offer poor readers half the opportunities for reading that good readers receive would seem to ensure a continuation of the status quo. While teachers may not be able to double the amount of time allocated for reading instruction for poor readers, there are several other possibilities that should be considered.

First, the amount of silent reading instruction and experience for the poor reader groups could be increased. This would ultimately increase the amount of material read since all members of the group would be reading simultaneously, rather than one child reading and the others listening and following along. Also, with practice, students' silent reading rate will exceed their oral reading rate, allowing them to read greater amounts of material. Finally, interruptions in the flow of reading will decrease since the other readers will be attending to their own reading and the teacher will be developing probes to assess both word identification and comprehension.

A second adaptation to be considered is the assignment of independent reading to poor readers. This reading may be from supplementary series, reading kits, trade books, or whatever. Too often teachers argue that their poor readers cannot read independently, but then confess to never having attempted to develop such abilities in these children. If an aide is available, the teacher should consider having him or her listen to retellings of material read independently by poor readers.

Finally, the teacher can use techniques such as sustained silent reading, echoic reading, read-along, or rereading to provide poor readers with the opportunity to develop and refine reading abilities through practice.

It is important that poor readers be given the opportunity to increase their reading experiences. How one chooses to accomplish this is of less concern. Giving poor readers additional experiences in reading will not necessarily turn them into good readers but it is a necessary first step in that direction. While the comment by Rist (1970) that low-achieving learners do not learn because they are not taught is perhaps too strong, it does seem reasonable to suggest that poor readers will not learn what they are not taught, and will never equal the learning rate of the better readers if they proceed at half the pace.

Reference Notes

1. Duffy, G. Teachers conceptions of reading project: A working paper (or more than you have ever wanted to know). East Lansing, Michigan: Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University, 1978.

References

Allington, R.L. Teacher interruption behaviors during primary grade oral reading. Journal of Educational Psychology, (in press).

Allington, R.L. If they don't read much how they ever gonna get good? Journal of Reading, 1977, 21 (1), 57-61.

Alpert, J.L. Do teachers adapt methods and materials to ability groups in reading? California Journal of Educational Research, 1975, 26, 120-123.

Archer, P. Teacher expectation as a determinant of reading performance. In Vincent Greaney (Ed.), Studies in reading. Dublin: The Educational Company, 1977.

Brophy, J.E., & Evertson, C.M. Learning from teaching: A developmental perspective, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1976.

Brophy, J.E., & Good, T.L. Teacher's communication of differential expectations for children's classroom performance: Some behavioral data. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1970, 61, 365-74.

Good, T.L., & Brophy, J.E. Behavioral expression of teacher attitudes. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1972, 63, 617-627.

Gumperz, J.J., & Hernandez-Chavez, E. Bilingualism, bidialectism and classroom interaction. In C. Cazden, V. Johns, and D. Hynes (Eds.), Functions of language in the classroom. New York: Teachers College, 1972.

Howlett, N., & Weintraub, S. Instructional procedures. In R. Calfee and P. Drum (Eds.), Teaching reading in compensatory classes, Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1980.

McDermott, R.P. Social relations as contexts for learning in school. Harvard Educational Review, 1977, 47, 198-213.

Niles, J.A., Graham, R.T., & Winstead, J.C. The effects of teacher response strategies on children's oral reading performance. Reading in Virginia, 1977, 5, 25-28.

Pehrsson, R.S.V. The effects of teacher interference during the process of reading. Or how much of a helper is Mr. Gelper? Journal of Reading, 1974, 8, 617-624.

Quirk, T.J., Trismen, D.A., Nalin, K., & Weinberg, S.F. The classroom behavior of teachers during compensatory reading instruction. Journal of Educational Research, 1975, 68, 185-192.

Rist, R.C. Student social class and teacher expectations: The self-fulfilling prophecy of ghetto education. Harvard Educational Review, 1970, 40, 411-450.

Weinstein, R. Reading group membership in first grade: Teacher behaviors and pupil experience over time. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1976, 68, 103-116.